

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ORIGIN SS-25

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 050847

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, TS

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA;

VISITS OF NOUIRA AND BOURGUIBA, JR.

REF: TUNIS 0954

1. FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM PRES. FORD HAS BEEN DELIVERED TO
AMB. HEDDA FOR PRES. BOURGUIBA: QUOTE DEAR
MR. PRESIDENT: I SINCERELY REGRET THAT YOU WILL BE UNABLE
TO VISIT ME IN WASHINGTON THIS SPRING. BUT I WANT TO
ASSURE YOU OF MY FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE REASONS WHICH
PROMPTED YOUR DECISION. WHILE I GREATLY LOOKED FORWARD
TO A PERSONAL MEETING WITH YOU AND THE BENEFIT OF YOUR
UISE COUNSEL, I ALSO BELIEVE -- KNOWING THE BURDENS OF
YOUR OFFICE -- THAT YOUR PERSONAL HEALTH IS OF THE
UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO THE GREAT TASKS WHICH YOU FACE IN
SERVING THE TUNISIAN NATION. I AM REASSURED, AS MY
PREDECESSORS HAVE BEEN, BY YOUR STRENGTH AND LEADERSHIP
WHICH HAS MEANT SO MUCH TO THE WARM AND CLOSE RELATIONS
BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES.

2. I WANT TO REAFFIRM THE GREAT IMPORTANCE THE UNITED
STATES ATTACHES TO THE CONTINUATION OF CLOSE TIES BETWEEN
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TUNISIA AND THE UNITED STATES WHICH HAVE BROUGHT US

TOGETHER IN A COMMON SEARCH FOR PEACE AND PROGRESS IN
TUNISIA, IN YOUR REGION AND AROUND THE WORLD. I BELIEVE
IT WOULD BE VERY USEFUL TO HAVE A HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGE OF

VIEWS. INASMUCH AS YOU ARE PRECLUDED FROM COMING TO
WASHINGTON AT THIS TIME, I WOULD VERY MUCH WELCOME THE
OPPORTUNITY OF A MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA, IF
YOU BELIEVE THIS WOULD BE USEFUL AND APPROPRIATE.

3. MR. PRESIDENT, MAY I EXTEND TO YOU MY VERY BEST
PERSONAL WISHES AND APPRECIATION FOR THE ROLE WHICH YOU
ARE PLAYING IN SUPPORT OF CONTINUED CLOSE RELATIONS
BETWEEN OUR NATIONS. SINCERELY, GERALD R. FORD. UNQUOTE.

4. PLEASE INFORM GOT THAT DEPARTMENT HAS PROVIDED
SIGNED COPY OF LETTER TO AMBASSADOR HEDDA FOR TRANSMITTAL
TO PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA. AMBASSADOR SEELYE MAY ALSO
INFORM GOT THAT INVITATION TO NOUIRA IS FOR AN OFFICIAL
VISIT ON MAY 1, TO INCLUDE A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT
AND A SMALL WORKING DINNER AND THAT, IF PRESIDENT
BOURGUIBA IS AGREEABLE, WE WOULD APPRECIATE CONFIRMA-
TION OF THAT DATE ASAP.

5. FYI: DEPARTMENT HAS ALSO MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS
ORALLY TO AMBASSADOR HEDDA ON THE ISSUE OF THE REQUEST
FOR BOURGUIBA, JR.: THE PRESIDENT FULLY UNDERSTANDS
THE REASONS FOR THE CANCELLATION OF PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S
STATE VISIT BUT HE IS DELIGHTED TO INVITE PRIME MINISTER
NOUIRA FOR AN OFFICIAL VISIT IN HIS PLACE. BOTH
THE PRESIDENT'S AND SECRETARY KISSINGER'S SCHEDULES
ARE EXTREMELY HEAVY FOR THE NEXT TWO MONTHS, MAKING
AN ADDED MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT FOR BOURGUIBA, JR.
VERY DIFFICULT SINCE THEY WOULD WANT TO RECEIVE HIM
PROPERLY. IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO HAVE PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S
OWN VIEWS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF A MEETING WITH BOURGUIBA,
JR. AT THIS TIME, IN LIGHT OF THE PRESIDENT'S INVITATION
TO PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA. END FYI.

6. WE ASSUME THAT AMBASSADOR SEELYE WILL BE ASKED
ABOUT THE REQUEST FOR A PRESIDENTIAL MEETING WITH
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BOURGUIBA, JR. UNTIL YOU RECEIVE FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS,
YOU SHOULD REPLY THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THAT THE DEPART-
MENT IS DISCUSSING THE MATTER WITH AMBASSADOR HEDDA. INGERSOLL

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